for, J. Council of the Alleghenies

Luke Steamer

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May, 2017

Around the turn of the 19th into the twentieth century, there were a lot of inventions emerging to replace the horse as a method of personal transportation. The railroads were well developed, and offered a smooth, steam-driven, reliable transportation mode, if you were going from one station to another. We still had the "last mile" problem, getting from home or work to the train station. And you traveled on the railroad's schedule, not yours. The idea that you could have your own personal transportation mode was beginning to emerge. Of course, nobody quite envisioned congestion, parking issues, the infrastructure of filling stations, traffic control, accidents, and all the incidentals. Cars were the shining new idea, that empowered Americans, and added to their independence.

But how to power these cars? In 1900, the field was about evenly split between gasoline-powered internal combustion, external combustion steam, and electricity. Steam was probably the best understood, and best developed technology. Steam locomotives had been around for a while. But the problem was to get the engine scaled down to fit in a personal conveyance. Trains had extensive rail to run on, and developed infrastructure for fueling and watering. The heavier the steam locomotive, the more it could pull, so developing light weight models was not considered. The refining and use of gasoline and other pertochemicals was in its infancy. It was not much earlier that the country relied on whale oil for illumination and lubrication. Electric motors were fairly well developed, but the battery technology was in its infancy. DC motors were bulky, and brush wear was an issue. The main problem was, as now, where to get a battery recharge. Each of these 3 technologies proceeded along, with no clear advantage over the others. In the year 1902, there were 900 new car registrations in the U. S., more than half of which were steam. Early gasoline powered cars required a crank start, a barrier to ownership to many. The introduction of the electric starter on the 1912 Cadillac removed that problem.

You've probably heard the rumors about the steam cars built in Luke, Maryland, and have noticed the almost total lack of information on the topic. Well, I recently got lucky, and I want to share the information.

One steam product was the *Maryland Steam Delivery Wagon*, with a vertical, 2 cylinder (2-1/2" x 4-1/2"), double slide valve engine, delivering 12 hp at 2,000 rpm. The rear axle was driven by a chain drive. The boiler was operated at 180 psi, and had a 50 gallon water tank, and a 10 gallon gasoline tank. There was a steam-driven boiler feed pump, and air compressor. The 2,000 pound vehicle, with a 1,000 pound payload achieved 30 mph, and could climb a 15% grade (like some of those Luke side streets). The manufacturer claimed, " It can be used on all sections of the country, for all purposes, in all kinds of weather on all kinds of roads, with a positive assurance of reaching one's destination without a breakdown."

The boiler had a pilot light, and could be left unattended for hours. There were several passenger models offered as well, ranging from $900 to $2,500.

The Maryland Automobile Manufacturing Company, usually cited as the Luke entity, was chartered in the State of Maryland in 1900 by S. B. Harcum, Joseph Barren, Alexander S. Stern, Milton Jacobi and John C. Boessel. It was located in Baltimore. It is not clear whether this company bought the Luke Company and moved operations to Baltimore. We do know that the Maryland Automobile

Manufacturing Company was bought by a Baltimore food machinery company, the Sinclair Scott Co., who produced a gasoline car from around 1900 to 1910.

The gas car was originally the *Ariel*, of the Ariel Motor Car Company of Boston, 1905-1906. The name was changed to *Maryland*. Produced as the Maryland 1906-1910. Gas, 4 cylinder, 201 cu in, ohv, 40 h.p. Water-cooled..The car had a Distinctive Oval radiator.

I found no patents issued to anyone in Luke,MD, regarding automobiles. I have not yet checked all the old garages and shed in Luke,

Ref: Bentley, John, *Oldtime STEAM CARS* (Arco Automobile Library), Arco Publishing, 1969, 2nd ed, ISBN-0668020733, P. 111.